

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CLINIC

YALE LAW SCHOOL

TO: Senator Gary Winfield, Co-Chairman
Representative Larry Butler, Co-Chairman
Members of the Housing Committee

FROM: Alex Taubes, Community & Economic Development Clinic, Yale Law School

DATE: February 5, 2015

RE: Sec. 8-30g Moratorium Provisions

RECOMMENDATION: Reject all proposed changes to sec. 8-30g

Reject bills No. 123; No. 171; No. 172; No. 403; No. 2138; No. 5055; No. 5056; No. 5057; No. 5254; No. 5306; 5576; No. 5577; No. 5578; No. 5579; No. 5580; No. 5581; No. 5582; No. 5802; No. 5803; No. 5804; No. 5805; No. 6126; No. 6127; No. 6128; No. 6129; No. 6130; No. 6131; No. 6135; and No. 6139.

Members of the Connecticut Housing Committee:

My name is Alex Taubes. I am a lifelong resident of Connecticut, I grew up in Fairfield and Madison, and I am a third-year student at Yale Law School. Since my first summer during law school, when I first worked in New Haven at the Ludwig Center for Community Economic Development, I have researched issues related to housing and economic opportunity in Connecticut.

I oppose all changes to Connecticut's Affordable Housing Appeals Act, § 8-30g, because Connecticut needs affordable housing, and 8-30g helps address this vital need. Connecticut's lack of affordable housing hurts our economy. Everybody knows young people are leaving. The number of people age 25-44 living in our state declined by 12.3% from 2000 to 2010.¹ Many who have already left grew up here and received a world-class education in Connecticut. They wanted to stay, but it's too expensive to live here and start a family.

The majority of students in Connecticut are graduating with significant debt.² The average Connecticut college graduate has more than \$30,000 in student debt when she leaves school.³ If we want college

¹ *Compare* U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, *Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: Connecticut 2010*, AMERICAN FACT FINDER, *available at* http://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/DEC/10_DP/DPDP1/0400000US09 (24-44 year olds make up 904,815 residents, or 25.3% of Connecticut's 2010 population), *with* U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, *Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: Connecticut 2000*, AMERICAN FACT FINDER, *available at* http://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/DEC/00_SF1/DP1/0400000US09 (24-44 year olds made up 1,032,689 residents, or 30.4% of Connecticut's 2000 population).

² Allyson Fredericksen, *A Mountain of Debt*, ALLIANCE FOR A JUST SOCIETY & CONN. CITIZEN ACTION GROUP (September 2014), *available at* http://allianceforajustsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/CT_A.Mountain.of_Debt_FINAL-1.pdf, at 1.

³ Matthew Reed & Debbie Cochrane, *Student Debt and the Class of 2013*, INSTITUTE FOR COLLEGE ACCESS & SUCCESS: PROJECT ON STUDENT DEBT (November 2014), *available at* <http://projectonstudentdebt.org/files/pub/classof2013.pdf>, at 3.

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graduates to stay here and start families here, we need more affordable apartments, townhouses, and starter homes they can move into while they pay off their loans.

Section 8-30g allows developers to build homes for the next generation. Many market-rate apartments, townhouses, condos, and homes built because of § 8-30g are smaller, more moderately priced, and closer to transit than previous options, allowing families to save money on rent, heat, and potentially the costs of a first or a second car. By encouraging new market-rate homes to be built, Section 8-30g invites young professionals to start their families and careers in Connecticut instead of other states.

Affordable housing created because of Section 8-30g and set aside for low-income families addresses an even more vital economic need: job growth. Entry-level jobs are increasingly located in Connecticut's suburbs, like Branford or Fairfield, but most people seeking those jobs live in the cities—where housing is more affordable—without reliable access to those opportunities.⁴ Economists call this a “spatial mismatch,” and evidence suggests Connecticut has one of the worst mismatches in the country.⁵ In addition to contributing to racial and economic barriers and disparities, Connecticut's spatial mismatch is a drag on the economy.

Each day, Connecticut suburbs import thousands of workers. Police officers, firefighters, and teachers cannot afford to live in the towns they serve. Lower-wage workers like janitors, retail workers, and home care providers for seniors face even greater challenges in finding a home near their suburban jobs. DataHaven found that there are 61,000 entry-level jobs in the suburban towns near New Haven, but only 47,000 lower-income workers can afford to live in those towns.⁶ Connecting low-income workers to job openings is a significant challenge for employers in our region looking to expand.

This session you will be asked to tackle a state budget deficit. Unfortunately, forecasts suggest that budget deficits are only getting worse. In the long-term, the only way to close this gap without raising taxes or cutting spending is to grow Connecticut's economy. Section 8-30g does that, addressing a vital need: the lack of affordable housing in suburban communities is killing our state economically. Weakening or repealing 8-30g, in any of our towns, will cause more economic stagnation just when our economy is turning around.

Building more affordable housing in suburban communities not only creates construction jobs, it helps workers live where the jobs are, making it easier for people to find employment and businesses to grow. New housing can also create an incentive for more businesses to locate in our communities—bringing in revenue that can relieve property tax burdens. No one can blame Connecticut residents for fearing change. But in this modern economy, Connecticut must adapt to compete and survive. Section 8-30g is an essential tool for providing the kind of affordable housing—for low-income workers and young

⁴ Mark Abraham, How Transportation Problems Keep People Out of the Workforce in Greater New Haven, GREATER NEW HAVEN JOB ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION WORKING GROUP & DATA HAVEN (December 2014), *available at* http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org/sites/default/files/publications/datahaven_transprpt_web_pgs.pdf, at 4.

⁵ Michael A. Stoll, Job Sprawl and the Spatial Mismatch between Blacks and Jobs, BROOKINGS INSTITUTION (February 2005), *available at* http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2005/2/metropolitanpolicy%20stoll/20050214_jobsprawl.pdf, at 5, 10.

⁶ Abraham, *note* 4, at 4.

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professionals alike—that Connecticut’s economy needs. If we want a vital, prosperous, growing Connecticut, we need Section 8-30g.